

HB 612 -- CELL PHONES IN PRISON

SPONSOR: Fitzwater (144)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Civil and Criminal Proceedings by a vote of 8 to 4. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on the Judiciary by a vote of 8 to 1.

Currently, it is a crime to possess, deliver, deposit, or conceal specified items in any correctional center, prison, or jail. This bill adds a two-way telecommunication device and any of its component parts to the list of prohibited items.

The bill provides that the prohibition of a two-way telecommunication device does not apply to a law enforcement officer lawfully engaged in his or her duties or any individual authorized to use a two-way communication device in the facility.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the smuggling of a two-way communication device into a correctional institution compromises the security of the facility. It can allow a prisoner and his or her confederates to plan attacks on guards and their families, arrange narcotics transactions, and plan an escape. The bill will give prosecutors more tools to combat this dilemma.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Fitzwater (144); Missouri Sheriffs Association; Missouri Department of Corrections; and Amy Roderick.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.